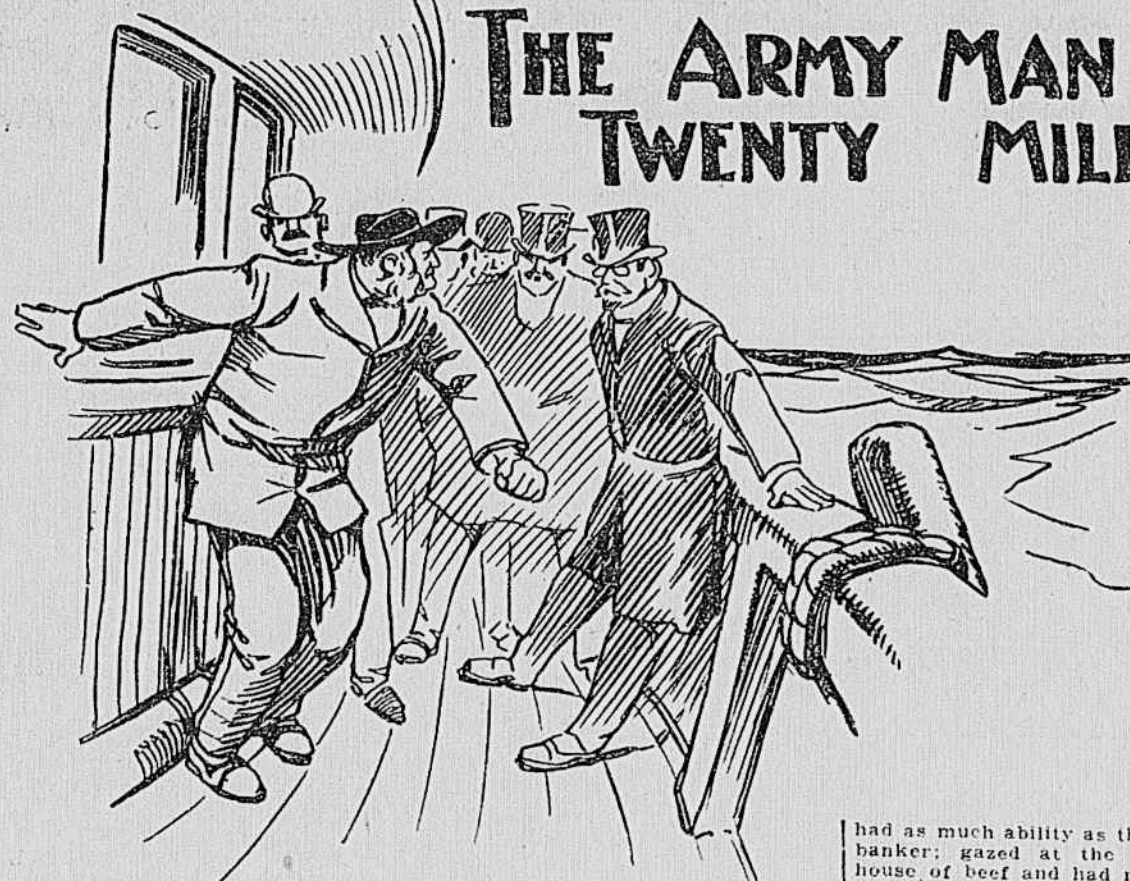


REAL ROMANCES OF THE BUSINESS WORLD

THE ARMY MAN WHO KIDNAPPED TWENTY MILLIONAIRES



BY RICHARD SPILLANE.

Over the long bridge that connects Galveston with the mainland there rolled one morning a train that bore more wealth perhaps than ever crossed the bay before or since. Five hundred million dollars—nearly thirty-five times the amount the United States paid to France for the great West—would be a modest estimate of the fortunes of those who looked out over the placid waters from the windows of the train. There were only twenty-five or thirty persons in the whole four cars that made up the train, but twenty of the lot were multimillionaires. There was a prince of the house of oil, a mild-mannered, quiet, solemn-looking man, whose modest attire and soft voice hid the reputation he had for business sharpness, rapacity and cruelty almost without parallel. There was a master of money, head of the mighty bank of the nation's metropolis. Hundreds of millions of dollars were entrusted to his care. Few men had a finer knowledge of commerce, politics and finance. In Wall Street he was a power, but aboard this special train he looked the ordinary, commonplace man.

There was a baron of the house of beef. He looked more the leader, the man of action, the captain of industry, than did any of the others, but he was very different to the prince of the house of oil and the president of the great bank. There was a mill man from Rhode Island, fat, portly, puffed, who coughed and wheezed and wheezed and coughed if he overexerted himself the slightest degree. With all his millions he could not draw a good, long breath. There was a neat, trim, kindly looking old gentleman who was as spry as a youth. No one who did not know him ever would

suppose he made his many millions through death and destruction. His fine eyes never sparkled more and he never became more enthusiastic than when telling of the killing qualities of his firearm or that dream of his manufacture. There was a phlegmatic young man whose chief claim to fame was the fact that he was the son of a man who rose from selling mouse traps to be a railroad king, a money king, a telegraph king and a lot of other things, and incidentally left \$50,000,000 when he came to quit this world.

There were multimillionaires whose names were known broadly and there were multimillionaires whose names were known to few outside the money circle. They were altogether now on the inspection of their property, for they were the principal owners of the securities of the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railroad. For nearly a week they had been riding over the various lines of the big system, and now they were to inspect the Gulf terminus of the road.

A flock of multimillionaires does not float into a town like Galveston every day. In the week, and such a group as that aboard the special was enough to stir the Texas seaport to doing itself proud. A delegation from the Cotton Exchange was at the station to welcome the great men and offer the hospitality of the city to them. A delegation from the Chamber of Commerce gazed upon the benign features of the prince of the house of oil and wondered how he had been so maligned; gazed on the dull features of the son of the man of \$50,000,000 and wondered if he had any of his father's brains concealed in that dull mask of a headpiece; gazed at the president of the mighty bank and wondered if he really

had as much ability as their own great banker; gazed at the baron of the house of beef and had no difficulty in understanding his success. And, the scrutiny of big and little multimillionaires, the members of the two delegations set about to utilize every minute of the visitor's stay to the best advantage to all concerned and the most pleasure of the city's guests.

Galveston is not big, but its attractions, if few, are appealing. Its beach is one of the finest in the world. Broadway, which marks the backbone of the city, is a great, wide, noble thoroughfare, lined with beautiful dwellings. Through the center of the great avenue is an esplanade, bordered with oleanders, riotous with blooms. The residential district speaks the sub-tropics, but half a mile or three-quarters of a mile away the wharf front speaks of the North—the land of hustle, life and the city boasts, with some of the biggest and busiest piers in the world along it, and with sometimes 100 ocean steamships taking or discharging cargo at one time. But the palms and the oleanders, the ocean and the beautiful homes, the great elevators and the monster piers, were not the chief sight the people had to show to the distinguished visitors from the North. The one great thing for them to see would be jetties. Mountains in central and west Texas had been leveled to supply the rock for them. More than five miles out into the Gulf these walls of rock extended. Upon them depended the greatness of the city as a port. The tidal waters confined between these two walls of rock maintained a perpetual scour upon the bars that formerly blocked the approach to the harbor. Where once only ships of the shallowest draft could float, now ships of the deepest draft could come and go without trouble.

When the twenty multimillionaires arrived in Galveston the jetties were never there as they are today. The tremendous work they were to do was only beginning. The whole world knew they were a magnificent success and that they marked a decided step forward in harbor improvement.

The twenty multimillionaires, with all respect to their entertainers, were more desirous of seeing those wonderful walls the government had built out into the sea than they were to inspect the wharves or the homes or the thoroughfares of Galveston. The jetties meant increased business for the M. K. & T., and those twenty multimillionaires were strictly business. They gently intimated that if the delegation would cut out the joy riding and hurry up the jetty trip they would be delighted. The committees, although this interfered sadly with the program as they had planned it, hastened to do as their guests desired.

They sent to the office of the army engineer, under whose direction the work on the jetties was being done, for permission to use the big, ocean-going tug Hortense for the accommodation of the multimillionaires. Army people are extremely polite, but they are exceedingly formal. No one could give the necessary order, because the major, who bossed the government job happened to be absent. Where was the major? No one seemed to know. He might return any minute, and he might not be in for hours. The messengers waited patiently five or ten minutes, and then reported to the committee. While the messengers were at the army office the committee had escorted the multimillionaires to the pier where the Hortense was moored, and all hands had gone aboard. The multimillionaires knew the major and were well aware of his peculiarities. They knew he was one of the greatest engineers in the government service, but he was extremely irascible, and occasionally he acted peculiarly. This was one of his peculiarities. They had reason to believe, from some reports that had come to them, if they could get into communication with him there would be no difficulty in obtaining permission to use the government tug, but to reach him was another matter. Half a dozen messengers were sent to visit at times were called up on telephone, but without getting trace of him.

Meanwhile the multimillionaires wondered at the delay. The longer the party delayed, the more impatient the visitors became, and at last one of the local men took it upon himself to tell the captain of the Hortense that he would take upon himself the responsibility of ordering the boat away. The captain was reluctant, but at last consented. The lines were cast off, and the big tug started on her trip. Little did the twenty multimillionaires imagine what would be their experiences before that trip ended.

Up and down the bay the Hortense steamed, to give to the august company a worthy view of the commerce of the port, and then the tug was pointed out toward the entrance to the harbor. Within an hour the visitors were seeing the jetties at close range. Every detail of the colossal work was explained to them. The tug steamed close along the great wall of limestone and granite that forms the north jetty, and it was allowed to its end, far out in the Gulf of Mexico. Then the Hortense went beyond the jetties so the visitors could meet some incoming vessels from over the seas. The day was ideal. Off to the east there was a speck on the horizon that suggested a storm, but it was so far distant that there was no danger from it.

The fresh sea air was so refreshing after the long journey over the hot prairie lands that the twenty million-

aires enjoyed it immensely. Even the Fall River cotton man took a chance and expanded his lungs with a good draught of fresh air. He wheezed and coughed a lot, but tried it once more. The gulf breezes, he confided to one of his friends, were so mild in comparison with those of the North Atlantic that he believed he would get rid of his asthma if he lived in Texas for a while.

When the gulf and its balmy air had begun to pall on the party, the Hortense turned back. This time the tug skirted the south jetty. Here the visitors had the pleasure of seeing some anglers catch tarpon, and they watched in raptures when they witnessed the great fight the silver king of the Southern seas makes when he gets hooked.

The shore end of the jetty was near at hand, and the Hortense was about to enter the harbor when the man in the pilot house espied a craft heading out from the bay under full steam. Its whistle was tooting and a man in the bow signaling with his hat. The captain of the Hortense reached for his glasses, trained them on the approaching craft, and then whistled in a way that made the wheelman glance at him sharply.

"I think," said the captain, "it's the major." The wheelman smiled queerly and the captain took up his glasses again. A minute later he announced, "Yes, it's the major, and from the way his jaws are going I'll bet a thousand to one he's swearing a blue streak."

On came the tug, her whistle still tooting. The Hortense shut down her engines as the other tug approached, and soon the two vessels were within half. The man in the bow of the approaching tug was coming aboard, the only announcement was made, and a minute later he did come aboard. He did not do it gracefully, and that did not tend to improve his temper. But for the captain he would have fallen to the deck. Once he righted himself he turned fiercely on the captain.

"Who ordered you to take my boat out with this crowd of people?"

The captain endeavored to explain, but before he had gone far one of the local multimillionaires seized a government vessel" cried the major.

"Cease your shouting," said the multimillionaire angrily. "You've been drinking. You are drunk and are making an exhibition of yourself. Go below."

"Below?" he shrieked, "you have the audacity to talk to me in that way on my own boat? I'll teach you and your cabin boys a lesson they'll never forget."

And he did. Which he had come out from the city had departed. The Hortense was alone in the roadstead. The major, drunk or sober, was master of the government tug. He ordered the twenty multimillionaires and the members of the committee off the deck and into the cabin. The jetties had been so inside he ordered the door locked. The cabin was rather small for so large a tug. It seemed more cramped, more stuffy, more uncomfortable. A little later when they discovered the Hortense had been turned and was heading out between the jetties once more. "The man is mad," said the Prince of the House of Oil. "Where is he going?"

He was going to sea, it seemed. The men in the cabin pounded on a window until the door came to them.

"You are heading out to sea," one of them said to him in a conciliatory tone. "These gentlemen are to leave by their special train at 7 P. M. They will be late if you don't turn back."

"Late?" Turn back?" yelled the major. "You brutes! Talk to me about special train. You're on a special train now of your own selection, and you'll stay aboard until I'm ready and ready to have you return. All the lords of Wall Street could not help you now."

The Hortense rose and dipped in the swell. The jetties had been so interesting before had no interest to the twenty multimillionaires now. They thought of their special train. They thought of their stomachs, for the sea air had aroused a most decided appetite. But more than all else they thought of the wild money they had won by his mercy. He was remarkably powerful. The captain of the tug was in moral and physical fear of him.

What did the drunk-major man propose doing? If he broke the windows of the little cabin or broke through the stout door there undoubtedly would be bloodshed. The major was armed. He had expressed regret that he did not have iron so he could chain the whole party up. How far would his madness carry him? This was a nice situation for some of the mightiest men of money in America to be placed in. They were being kidnapped, being taken to sea by an irresponsible creature. What would Wall Street do in the morning if they were reported missing? The sea was roughening and the sky was becoming dark.

Darkness added intensity to any unpleasant situation. The crew of the twenty multimillionaires he said that they bore their sufferings with pretty good spirit. Occasionally they pounded on the door or window, some of the major responded. He was pleased with enfolded, argued with, but to no purpose. He had stormed about the wharf at Galveston too long after he discovered the Hortense had been taken without his permission to be softened by such pleadings as they were making. For outcrying his feelings they would have to pay in full.

The Prince of the House of Oil, with calm philosophical mind, studied the situation as he had studied many problems, and when he was satisfied

that he had solved it he announced the fact.

"Gentlemen," he said, "we must summon the major no more. Each appeal adds only to his sense of satisfaction. We must be silent. The storm may appease him, may cool his wrath, may bring him to his senses sooner than any pleading by us."

It was hard to follow his advice, but they did it. Down in their hearts they registered vows as to the revenge they would take if they ever reached land again. The roughness of the sea was a distressing circumstance, especially to the multimillionaires as were not used to the sea. Now and then one of the party would consult his watch. It became so dark after a time that they had to light matches to see the hands. A little after 7 P. M. one of the multimillionaires made a discovery.

"We're turned, we're going back!" he cried. "See the lights 'way off in the distance? It must be the city."

Far away they could discern lights. As the tug dipped they would disappear. As it rose they would be in view. A slight dim light brought to the attention of the multimillionaires. The thanksgiving went up from the twenty multimillionaires.

Never did those masters of money watch flicker more intently than they did the distant lights. Every minute now brought them nearer to deliverance, and with every minute their spirits rose.

It was nearly 9 P. M. when the twenty multimillionaires scrambled ashore at the Brick Wharf. They were ravenously hungry and bitterly angry, for the major had said that when they released them that added fuel to their wrath. Some of those multimillionaires vowed they never would let the major's precious lives to a boat again.

The whole party hurried to the Tremont Hotel, and there a hasty meal was prepared. Whatever hurt they had suffered certainly did not extend to their appetites. Never had they eaten so hungrily, so heartily, since the days of their youth. But once their hunger was appeased they were eager to have the major punished. His offense was one that must be brought to the attention of the President of the United States at once. The great lawyer who accompanied the multimillionaires on their trip was delegated to draw up a statement to be telegraphed to Washington, and while he was thus engaged the Prince of the House of Oil went with his private secretary and read some telegrams that had been received while the twenty multimillionaires were viewing the jetties.

One of the telegrams brought a flush of pleasure to the face of the man of many millions. After reading it he sat for many minutes smiling, the sheet of paper in his hand.

He was seated thus when word came to him that the message to the President was finished. He rose and went to the room where the other multimillionaires had assembled. He listened to the reading of the statement, and when the lawyer finished and the other men had voiced their approval, he spoke.

"Gentlemen," he said, in his calm, kindly voice, "I have to ask a favor. Something has happened—a great happiness has come into my life this day, and I do not wish to mar it by the act we contemplated doing. Much as that man deserves punishment I ask that we forgive him. This will explain."

He passed the telegram to the lawyer. The lawyer glanced at it and stepped forward and shook the hand of the Prince of the House of Oil. The others read and they, too, shook his hand.

The lawyer then took the paper over which he had labored for twenty minutes and tore it into minute particles. As he did so the Prince of the House of Oil smiled and, bowing to right and left, said: "Gentlemen, I thank you."

Down the great staircase to the rotunda the twenty multimillionaires were marching, when through the entrance of the hotel lurched the major. The Prince of the House of Oil still held the telegram in his hand, and as the major approached he stepped forward.

"Sir," he said, "I think you should know why it is that we will not regret what you, the President, for your conduct to-day. Read this."

The major took the message. It was with difficulty that he read:

"A boy, Mother and son doing well." He looked at the multimillionaires and then laughed uproariously. "Why, you old rascal," he shouted, "you're old enough to be my father."

"Sir," exclaimed the multimillionaire in a shocked voice, "you are mistaken. This refers to my grandson, my first grandson."

The major looked at him a moment and then, slapping him on the back, said: "Come and let us drink to the youngster."

But the Prince of the House of Oil declined.

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The present high cost of living should make us stop and think.

ONE spoonful of

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